

The Mid-Michigan Mirror

... A Reflection of Romance

May 2007

Winner of the 1999 RWA® Mid-size Chapter Newsletter Contest

Volume V Issue 4

A Publication of Mid-Michigan RWA • Post Office Box 2725 • Kalamazoo, Michigan 49003-2725
www.midmichiganrwa.org mirror@midmichiganrwa.org

—THE BOARD ROOM—



An Inspiring May Meeting in Jackson

By Lisa Childs-Theeuwes, Vice-president & Program Chair

Please join us for a fabulous meeting on May 19th at 11:30 am at Bella Notte Ristorante in Jackson. Our speaker will be the phenomenally talented, multi-published Gail Gaymer Martin.

Gail's workshop, "Writing the Christian Romance and Selling a How-to-Book to Writers Digest," will provide information on the ways Christian romance differs from secular romance and what it takes to sell a book to Writers Digest.

After many years of presenting workshops, and writing 40 Christian romance and romantic suspense novels, Gail packaged her knowledge and experience into a how-to book. Gail's **Writing the Christian Romance** will be released in December 2007 by Writers Digest Books.

Meeting Date: Saturday, May 19, 2007

Time: 11:30 a.m. lunch; 1:30 p.m. program; 2:30 p.m. business meeting.

Place: Bella Notte Ristorante, 137 W. Michigan Ave., Jackson, MI.

RSVP: ltheeuwes@msn.com.

Meeting Directions are on page 2. **MMM**

[In the April Mirror, we gained valuable insight into the inspirational romance genre, thanks to articles by Gail Martin, Dana Corbit and Lucy Kubash. At our May meeting, Gail Martin plans to expand our knowledge even further. Ed.]



Award-winning author and MMRWA member Gail Gaymer Martin writes romance, romantic suspense, and women's fiction for Steeple Hill and Barbour Publishing. She began writing fiction in 1997 and sold her first novel in 1998. Today she has signed forty fiction contracts, with over a million books in print. Gail's books have been honored with seven national awards, including the Romantic Times Reviewers Choice for Best Love Inspired 2002. Gail's book, **Writing the Christian Romance**, will be released by Writers Digest in December 2007. Visit her web site at www.gailmartin.com and look on her For Writers pages for information on writing Christian romance.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Table of Contents
May Meeting/Program Info
- 2 May Meeting Directions
2007 Meeting Schedule
Mission Statement
- 3 The President's 2 Cents Worth
Officers & Committee Chairs
- 4 Retreat Recap
- 6 Remembering Past Retreats
- 7 Member News
May/June Birthdays
- 8 Welcome New Member
IWWAB Reminder
AGM Proxy Reminder
- 9 HEA Contest
Authors' Upcoming Releases
Contest Entry Advice
- 10 "The Mother Who Writes" by
Jackie Braun
- 11 "Soliloquy of an Empty Nester"
by Wil A. Emerson
- 12 "Lessons Learned While
Traveling Down The Yellow Brick
Road" by Lorelee Lillibridge
- 13 Editor's Notes, Submission
Guidelines, Policy
Chapter Contact Information
- 14 [Mailer for printed issues only]

May Meeting Directions

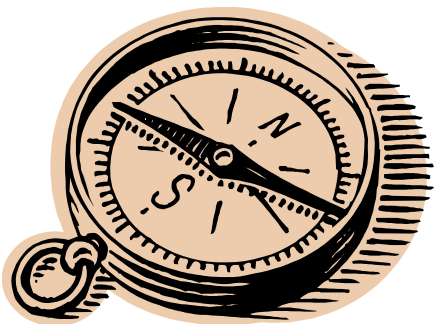
Directions to Bella Notte Ristorante
137 W. Michigan Ave.
Jackson, MI 49201
Ph (517) 782-5727

From Kalamazoo: Take I-94 East. Then take US-127 N/M-50 exit #138 toward Lansing/Jackson. Turn right onto MI-50 E/US-127 S. Turn left onto W. Michigan Ave./MI-50/US-127 S. Turn slight left onto W. Michigan Ave.

From Grand Rapids: Take I-96 East. Merge onto MI-50 E/US-127 S. Turn left onto W. Michigan Ave./MI-50/US-

From Lansing and the North: Take 127 S. toward Marshall/Jackson. Turn slight left onto W. Michigan Ave.

From Detroit: Take I-94 West. Exit on M-106/Cooper St. Exit #139 toward downtown Jackson. Turn left on Cooper St. Turn right onto E. Ganson St. Turn left onto N. Mechanic S. Turn right onto W. Michigan Ave.



2007 MMRWA Meeting Schedule

MMRWA holds monthly meetings on a rotating basis in the areas of Grand Rapids, Jackson, Kalamazoo, and Lansing. The Saturday luncheon meetings are held from 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. in local restaurants and are open to the public. Meetings begin with lunch (optional) and the programs start at approximately 1:30 p.m. There is no charge for the meeting and program; luncheon charges are the responsibility of the individual attendees.

January: No meeting.

February 17: Elks Lodge in Grand Rapids; Grand Rapids Police Lt. Mark Ostapowicz will speak about his experiences in the Grand Rapids Police Department.

March 17: Brewster's Kalamazoo; Nancy Gideon compares "The Tortoise and the Hare approach to your writing."

April 20-22: St. Ives Resort, Stanwood, Retreat From Harsh Reality 2007; Julie Kistler, guest author.

May 19: Jackson, Bella Notte Restaurant. Gail Gaymer Martin speaks on "How to Write an Inspirational Romance and Get a How-to Book Published with Writer's Digest."

June 16: La Senorita, Lansing; Jodi Lozon-Copeland discusses the erotica market.

July: No meeting.

August 18: Grand Rapids; tentative location, Famous Dave's new location on Northland Drive; tentative speaker, an assistant prosecutor for the City of Grand Rapids.

September 15: Brewster's, Kalamazoo; Jennifer Greene discusses "Trends: How to Balance an Author's Creative Needs and Still Address What it Takes to be Commercial."

October 20: Tentative—Jackson Library, multi-author panel discussion.

November 17: La Senorita, Lansing; Maris Soule on writing mystery and romance.

December: Grand Rapids -- either Famous Dave's or Elks -- Christmas Party.

Mission Statement: The purpose of the Mid-Michigan Chapter of Romance Writers of America® is to promote excellence in romantic fiction, to help writers publish and establish careers, and to provide continuing support for writers within the romance publishing industry.



The President's Two Cents Worth

By Annette Briggs

There are times when hearing a good story is what a person needs. One of those times for me is when my husband Dan and I are traveling long distances in the car. We've found that these treks can be so much nicer with a satisfying audio novel or two.

Unfortunately, some stories have been disappointments. After a few duds, we began to talk about why we felt let down—or why we just plain ejected and replaced the story with a different title. These are some of the weaknesses we found in the stories that failed to please:

Unlikable characters

Some novels don't even get started because the hero and / or heroine are not people you can like. When I find nothing admirable, sympathetic, or worthy in a character, I don't want to spend time with them. When you like the characters, can relate to them or identify with them, you can't abandon them. You hang in there through the tear-jerking, heart-pounding, tantalizing end.

Don't pull a switcheroo

One historical we listened to began with a swashbuckling adventurer escaping from jail. There was blackmail, a duchess with a secret past who was an old flame, and her current husband hunting her down. Then the tale switched to a couple of prissy lords dueling over nothing and one faking his death. My swashbuckler became a secondary character! And the duchess dropped out of the yarn entirely. I felt cheated.

Hold onto me

When civilization's most unselfish benefactor is scheduled to be beheaded, the most adorable child ever born will not get a life-saving marrow transplant, and the hero's beloved will be inducted into an evil sheik's harem -- for Heaven's sake -- throw me some clues so I can participate! Otherwise, I'll give up. Eject. Where is that Kenny Rogers CD? Which leads me to the next let-down:

Stupid endings

The heroine who has justifiably hated the hero's guts until the last three minutes of the story suddenly forgives him and wants to bear his children. Show me the hero doing things which would make her forgiveness make sense. Show those characters doing and being the kind of people together that would cause them to love one another.

Was it good for you?

A happily ever after ending doesn't end with the heroine giving up who she is to follow her hero into his world—or the other way around. If they're not the best of who they are together, their union isn't such good news.

People are hungry for good stories that entertain, teach, inspire—stories that pull us through the trouble, clear through to the gratifying end. It's our job as writers to provide such tales. Let's do it.

All the best,

Annette

2007 OFFICERS

President

Annette Briggs
info@midmichiganrwa.org

Vice-president

Lisa Childs-Theeuwes
meetings@midmichiganrwa.org

Co-Secretaries

Linda Cossel and Julie Lea
info@midmichiganrwa.org

Treasurer

Catherine McClain
treasurer@midmichiganrwa.org

2007 COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Cover to Cover Editor

Editor needed
covertocover@midmichiganrwa.org

Happily Ever After Contest

Jodi Lynn Copeland
contest@midmichiganrwa.org

Historian/Membership/Policy

Dawn Bartley,
members@midmichiganrwa.org

I Will Write a Book/Write for the

Money

Flavia Crowner

Library

Lucy Kubash and Maris Soule

Meetings/Programs

Lisa Childs-Theeuwes
meetings@midmichiganrwa.org

Member Recognition

Julie Lea

MMRWA Angel Award

Lucy Kubash

Mystery Gifts

Chair Needed

Newsletter Editor

Lana Miersen
mirror@midmichiganrwa.org

PAN Liaisons

Susan Charnley and Lana Miersen

Perseverance Fund

Catherine McClain
treasurer@midmichiganrwa.org

Publicity

Wendy Lebel

Retreat Chair

Pam Trombley
retreat@midmichiganrwa.org

Retreat Speaker Chair

Laurie Kuna

RWA® Pro Liaison

Tammy Kearly

Website Liaison

Lana Miersen
info@midmichiganrwa.org

—CHAPTER CHATTER—

RETREAT FROM HARSH REALITY 2007: A BRIGHT BEGINNING TO THIS SEASON OF OUR WRITING



Pam Trombley

By Pam Trombley, Retreat Chair

This year's annual Retreat From Harsh Reality was held on one of the most beautiful spring weekends we've ever had. Warm, sunny days in the upper seventies followed by nights just cool enough to be comfortable but still allow you to sleep with the windows open. Waking up to frogs and crickets and birds just a'chirping their little hearts out. Could it have been any better? Probably not, especially with our wonderful speaker, Julie Kistler, in our midst and fitting in like we've all known her for years.

St. Ives Resort, with the exception of the Inn, had been sold in early 2007 with the final deal signed a day before we arrived. The entire staff of both facilities turned over except for the manager at the Inn and one of the waitstaff who worked with us, Suzette. We were all nervous about how things would run but found that the new staff was eager to work with us and establish a long-term relationship. The "early crew" who arrived with me mid day on Friday to help get books, auction baskets and goody bags organized was a terrific help and we actually finished early for once. Thanks to Michelle Celmer, Alice Weidner, Cathy McClain, Maris Soule, Diana Stout, Dawn Bartley, Julie McMullen and Wil Emerson. Once we got all the great donations arranged and moved out of the way, Wil did a fabulous job decorating the room with bright colors and providing each attendee with a little prism to "help you see your future." Thanks, Wil, for brightening everything up even more than the weather. (Especially since we all really wanted to be outside.)

Cathy McClain set up the best-looking Registration table we've ever had, displaying pins and nightshirts sold by the chapter, goody bags and nametags provided to each attendee and more. Thanks, Cathy, for providing such a welcoming smile to each and every person who came to Retreat. Our nifty beach/goody bags were filled to overflowing with promo items and four books donated for each attendee!

As the Retreat "weekenders" began to arrive around 6 pm, fabulous smells wafted from the kitchen. We all feasted on pizza, Caesar salad and garlic cheese bread. (It was pretty obvious right from the get-go that the new chef they'd hired was going to work out.) Alice Weidner and her Food Committee of Dawn Bartley and Lisa Cardle set out a wonderful selection of desserts brought by everyone for after dinner delight. I think if we ever have a Retreat without PMS Pie, we'll just have to pack up and leave early... Thanks Alice, Lisa and Dawn, for the great desserts and wide assortment of table snacks you kept refilled all weekend long.

Friday night's Ice Breaker activity is always a surprise. We've done everything from killing off the speaker to running relay races to trying to out-write our fellow attendees and this year proved to be different once again. Laurie Kuna and Lorelee Lillibridge organized a game of knowledge played by teams which they arranged. (They asked everyone to rank their skills in five categories then split us up - supposedly according to our answers - but I have to tell you that our team thought it was rigged. <g>) It was a great way to meet people we didn't know beforehand and a lot of fun. Thanks to Laurie and Lorelee for kicking off our Retreat with a bang.

Saturday morning's beautiful sunrise wasn't enough to lure anyone away from the promise of a great day at Retreat. Julie Kistler spent the morning talking with us

"I think if we ever have a Retreat without PMS Pie, we'll just have to pack up and leave early..."

The Chapter publishes its business meeting minutes, treasurer's reports, and other legal documents online in the files section of the members-only MMRWABUSINESS list. See Policy, page 13.



about plotting and new ways of using ideas to keep our stories alive. She made us work a bit too so we could see for ourselves just what she was trying to show us. Several attendees were reported to say that they had “light bulb” moments when something Julie said struck home. She ran us all through an exercise using our own initials to show us how even the most bizarre ideas can be used to generate great story ideas. Some of the ideas generated in less than ten minutes were hilarious - boy, do we have some talented people in this group! Then she showed us how to generate a “high concept” and use them to sell our stories. Giving several great examples so we could all understand it, she even took one volunteer’s storyline and everyone helped generate a high concept for it.

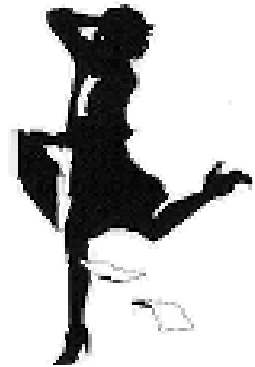
The presentation of the MMRWA Angel Award is always a highlight at Retreat. With this honor only bestowed on one member a year and so many deserving recipients to consider, this year’s Angel Award Committee had their work cut out for them. They chose a wonderful and most-deserving chapter member in Lucy Kubash. Dawn kept us all in suspense as she talked about Lucy without giving us her name at first but we all figured it out as she talked about one of our founding members and a person who is always there to pitch in when needed. Congratulations, Lucy, you deserve it!

Following a very tasty spread of sandwich fixings accompanied by pasta salad, our Book Sale opened for an hour where all attendees could purchase books from WaldenBooks or have one of our seventeen attending authors sign their purchases. Seventeen authors! I don’t think we’ve ever had that many before. Julie McMullen did a terrific job making sure the sale had all the reference books we’d requested and as many books by the signing authors as the store could get. She prepared a shopping list of all the books by the authors for everyone who attended. And she made up the chapter bookmarks that have become a Book Sale standard. Bright flowers decorated each author’s assigned signing spot and she provided a great birdwatcher’s raffle prize which was won by Vicki Schab. Thanks for another wonderful and successful sale, Julie!

Back in the St. Ives ballroom, Julie Kistler talked about dialogue. Her background in theatre where dialogue is everything since you can’t use flashbacks and inner thoughts was a perfect technique for teaching us how to use what characters say more effectively. She used two draftees, er, volunteers to act out two of her own short plays to demonstrate her points. Once she thought we “got it,” she gave us four sets of totally opposite characters to pick from and we had to write some dialogue between them. *Rhett and Scarlet go to White Castle* will probably live on forever.

Nothing is better than sharing your accomplishments with your friends, and that’s exactly what we did during our Member Recognition time. Thanks to Annette Briggs for preparing the great listing of achievements covering almost every person in attendance. There were no Pro Pin recipients to be recognized this year but we did have a First Sale in new member Cindy Pape who has sold not one, but several books recently. And we had First Sales plaques to present to Sarah (Reyers) Grimm and Lucy Kubash. Toasting all the successes was never sweeter thanks to Laurie Kuna, our toastmistress.

It is always a pleasure to organize our Book Basket Auctions and Raffle since every cent goes to such a worthy cause as the Kalamazoo YWCA’s Domestic Violence Program. Dawn Bartley was able to share with us that the facility is in the process of expanding and they can use all the help they can get so our efforts (and cash) were definitely needed. Michelle Celmer sold a whopping 223 raffle tickets for the Book Raffle - thanks, Michelle! We had over 25 baskets auctioned off in our Silent Auction and Live Auction and had over a hundred bundles of books for the raffle. Adding one generous anonymous donation, we raised \$1488 this year for the Y! Many thanks to everyone who donated items or bought raffle tickets and bid on baskets. No bidding was livelier than that for the former Warner/now Grand Central



“Nothing is better than sharing your accomplishments with your friends, and that’s exactly what we did during our Member Recognition time.”





“One attendee said that the time she spent on Saturday night helped get her past a point she’d been stuck on for weeks.”

Publishing editor critique or for Rosanne Bittner’s basket which included a ten chapter critique. Thanks to Aileen Hyne for obtaining the Grand Central critique for us! Laurie Kuna is our “Auctioneer For Life” since no one can goad a person more ruthlessly into bidding more than she originally planned. And laugh about it. Thanks, Laurie!

Saturday night dinner was a feast for the senses. The new chef prepared a delicious variety of dishes for us and no one left hungry. But most attendees still had a little room for more of the homemade desserts before a rousing performance by the Lazarus Connection and debut of their tribute ode to our speaker. While many attendees then retired to their rooms to converse or work with their critique groups, several attendees remained together in the Ballroom with their own writing works, some with excerpts, some with query letters, some just with ideas or current problems they were stuck on. One attendee said that the time she spent on Saturday night helped get her past a point she’d been stuck on for weeks. Amazing what a little extra brainpower - or just a fresh viewpoint - can do! (But we all knew that already, didn’t we? ☺)

Sunday morning brought more sunshine and the promise of a beautiful drive back to our regular worlds. But before we left, MMRWA held a short chapter meeting followed by our now permanent Romance Writing & Business Roundtable Discussion. Julie Kistler shared some of her thoughts on what’s going on in the biz, especially about what happens when an author’s line is dropped. Several of the attendees reported on what’s happened with their own lines in recent years. The roundtable is always a great ending to a terrific weekend of laughter, learning and friendship. Everyone was able to get on their way on time to return to their own “reality.”

I hope everyone had as great a time as I did this year. Our speaker for 2008 is Cindy Dees and Retreat will be either the third or fourth weekend of April. We’ll let you know as soon as we get the dates confirmed. **MMM**

[Comfortably appointed rooms and suites, meals prepared by a chef, a huge ballroom for our activities and workshops--Retreat wasn’t always so posh. Return with us now to those thrilling days of yesteryear, when pioneer members of MMRWA blazed a Retreat trail west-to Western Michigan University--and experienced their first encounters with Harsh Reality.]

In the beginning, there was . . . not much— but we had each other

By Diane Burton



Diane Burton

I remember when:

- ◆ We were in a Western Michigan University dorm in mid-May, with the heat on, when it was 80 degrees outside--and we couldn’t turn the heat off.
- ◆ WMU switched dorms on us at the last minute (it happened almost every year) and gave us a non-handicap-accessible building. Each time we went out for meals, Laurie Kuna and Lisa Cardle carried a member in her wheelchair up and down at least 10 stairs.
- ◆ Four of us shared a suite with the bathroom between two dorm rooms, and we hoped the former occupants weren’t guys.
- ◆ The retreat fee for my first retreat in 1993 was \$12 (which included continental breakfast on Saturday and Sunday); lodging was \$22; meals were on our own.

Times sure have changed. But, the purpose of retreat--to kick back, recharge our creative batteries, and connect with friends--hasn’t changed a bit. **MMM**

April 2007 Member News

Chris Allen-Riley (w/a Bronwyn Green): Release date of July 13, 2007 for *I Put a Spell on You*, first Torrid Tarot book with Ellora's Cave. Sold second TT, *Ronan's Grail*, on proposal! Received four really good reviews for *Overlord's Vessel!*

Dawn Bartley: Great Retreat, fantastic critique from Michelle Celmer.

Tereasa Bellew: Got fresh ideas for revisions on ms, working hard to get PC up and running. Enjoyed Retreat!

Rosanne Bittner: Apparently reissuing *Where Heaven Begins* in March has created a new demand for my inspirationals. Now Steeple Hill is going to reprint the second one, *Walk By Faith*, in December '08.

Jackie Braun: Working on contracted books and trying to find time to work on single title proposal.

Annette Briggs: Energized from getting a great critique at Retreat.

Diane Burton: Inspired by Julie Kistler's exercises to begin a new futuristic. (Thanks, Katie.)

Lisa Cardle: Will be putting what I've learned at Retreat to good use revising my contemporary paranormal with a twist. :-)

Michelle Celmer: May release *Best Man's Conquest*; August release *Accidentally Expecting*.

Lisa Childs: Had fun at Retreat! Finaled in WisRWA's Write Touch Reader's Choice with *Learning to Hula*, which is also a More Than Magic finalist. At work on deadlines for Harlequin Americans.

Sue Crouse: I finaled in Kiss of Death's Daphne contest, Single Title division, for *Put Him Out Of My Misery*. Now my partial will get read by Kimberly Whalen, Trident Media and Charlotte Herscher, Ballantine. Whoo-hoo!

Katie Dubois: Retreat is inspiring me to get started writing as soon as the MSU semester ends! Thanks, Julie, and everybody!

Sarah Grimm: Romantic suspense *After Midnight* will be a June 2007 E-release from Triskelion Publishing.

Renee Hand: I have a new RS novel coming out titled *Seduction of the Lonely Heart*. For a summary, visit my website, www.freewebs.com/reneehand.

Michele Hickerly: Sold two books to Ellora's Cave! I'm absolutely thrilled right now. What a great day!

Margo Hoornstra: *Honorable Intentions* placed 3rd in 2007 Winter Rose Contest in series contemporary category. Retreat was fun, helpful and can't wait for next year! Great critique from Lisa Childs really put my nose to the grindstone! Thanks, Lisa!

Anne Marie King-Jakubiak: Doing nothing but a lot of reading and sewing for customers.

Lucy Kubash: When I came home from retreat I found a new review for my book; 5 roses from redrosesforauthors.blogspot.com.

Laurie Kuna: Pitched to an agent and two editors at the PASIC conference in NYC in early April; submitted to all three.

Loralee Lillibridge: Attended PASIC conference in NYC in March. Attending a Citizen Police Academy for 10 weeks. Completing another category romance and brainstorming a cozy mystery.

Melissa Lucken: 4.5 hearts review from The Romance Studio for first EC release, *Everglades Wildfire*.

Gail Gaymer Martin: *With Christmas in His Heart* finaled for Award of Excellence, Holt Medallion, and National Readers Choice Award. *Writing the Christian Romance* Writers Digest Books, December 2007. Michigan Island series: *In His Dreams*, August 2007; *Family In His Heart*, January 2008. From Barbour: *And Baby Makes Five*, October 2007 release.



May Birthdays

1st Alice Weidner
 10th Jeffrey Redmond
 21st Leila Davis
 Kathleen Nance
 27th Nancy Gideon
 30th Lorelee Lillibridge

June Birthdays

3rd Chris Allen-Riley
 17th Annette Briggs
 19th Maris Soule





Reminders

➡ MMRWA members have until June 30th to enter the 2007 "I Will Write a Book" Challenge. Send the title of the WIP you are entering to IWWAB Chair Flavia Crowner and the \$5.00 entry fee to our treasurer Cathy McClain--and write that book!

➡ If you are not planning to attend RWA® National in July, be sure to fill out and send in your AGM proxy--if you haven't done so already. **MMM**



We're glad you joined us!

Catherine McClain: Concentrating on chapter business right now, managing to get a little work done on my WIP. Really enjoyed seeing everyone at Retreat, and Julie Kistler was a great speaker.

Katie McClain: Doing well in L.A. Just entered my first contest sponsored by the Scriptscene chapter. Looking forward to my first trip to the National Conference.

Julie McMullen: Started the Great Agent Search and planning my website; shopping around my *Ties that Bind*, my Manistee time travel novel.

Lana Miersen: Working on making the *Mirror* more accessible; also editing newsletter for homeowners' association. Working on WIP when I can and revising futuristic in between. Retreat was very invigorating!

Dana Corbit Nussio: April release *Flower Girl Bride*. Finishing two-book proposal.

Cindy Pape: Sold novella to Wild Rose Press; seeking agent for full-length paranormal. I sold a novella—my first erotica—to Ellora's Cave. It's part of their "quickie" series, and a Halloween story, so will be released in October.

Jeffrey Redmond: I now have three SF&F romance adventures in print from Double Dragon Publishing: *The Islands of Mak-Naw*, *The Valley of Vondar*, and *Fair Aer-Inn*. All three are available for download at www.double-dragon-ebooks.com.

Patti Shenberger: *A Miracle Through Time* available now in e-book, in print May 11th at Barnes and Noble among other places. 2 sequels wanted by Wild Rose Press for *A Miracle Through Time* and 2 for *Take No Prisoners*, a Wild Rose Press August release. Busy, busy! Now to start writing again.

Maris Soule: Received cover and copy edits for *The Crows*. Continue to work on the Skagway story. Judged non-published Daphne.

Diana Stout: Working on medieval historical.

Pam Trombley: Working way too much but have been so reenergized by Retreat, I'm going to figure out how to get back to doing what I love: writing.

Philly Tucker: RS Finalist in Rebecca contest. Great Retreat!

Alice Weidner: Working on revisions to Depression Era novel. Still waiting to hear from confession magazine on short story. **MMM**

Welcome to MMRWA!

Introducing our new member—

Donna Devens holds a B.S. degree in Biochemistry and currently works full-time in the regulatory department of a pharmaceutical company.

Donna, who lives in Plainwell, Michigan, started writing about 12 years ago, but only got serious about her writing a year ago. She writes contemporary romance novels and romantic suspense.

Her master plan is to replace her full-time career as a biochemist with that of a successful full-time writer! **MMM**

“Happily Ever After” Contest

June 6th Entry Receipt Deadline Only Weeks Away!



The "Happily Ever After" Contest is a last chapter contest, the purpose of which is to challenge and inspire authors of romance and to garner feedback on that all-important last chapter and "HEA" before submitting work to an editor or agent.

The categories and final round judges for entries in the "Happily Ever After" contest are listed below.

Short/Long Contemporary Series — Patience Smith, Silhouette
Single Title/Mainstream with Romantic Elements (young adult, women's fiction, etc.) — Michelle Grajkowski, 3 Seas Literary Agency
Romantic Suspense — Miriam Kriss, Irene Goodman Literary Agency

Historical – Hilary Sares, Kensington Publishing

Paranormal (shapeshifters, fantasy, sci-fi, time travel, etc.) – Laura Bradford, Bradford Literary Agency

Inspirational – Jessica Alvarez, Steeple Hill

Erotica/Sensual Romance – Felicia Mills, Red Sage Publishing

Enter the last chapter and epilogue, if applicable (up to twenty-seven pages) of your manuscript and a 1-3 page judged synopsis of the entire novel, for a maximum of thirty pages. The entry must include the final scene in its entirety.

All entries must be uncontracted at the time of the contest entry receipt deadline, which is Wednesday, June 6, 2007. Any entries received after that date will be returned. Finalists will be contacted on or around Thursday, August 10, 2007. Finalist placements as determined by an agent or editor will be announced on or around Thursday, October 12, 2007.

First Round: The first round will be judged by experienced and trained judges, each entry receiving three (3) judges with at least one (1) being a published author. A fourth judge will be used in the event a discrepancy score is determined necessary. The top three (3) entries from each category will advance to the final round.

Final Round: The finalists in each category will be ranked by an agent or editor. The agent or editor will be encouraged to answer four questions to help the author improve his/her manuscript.

First Place in each category will receive entry into next year's contest, a certificate representing their placement, and a Michigan-themed prize. Second Place in each category will receive a certificate representing their placement and a Michigan-themed prize. Third place in each category will receive a certificate representing their placement.

For more complete information and to download contest forms, go to www.midmichiganrwa.org/contest.html. Questions? Please contact Contest Coordinator Jodi Lozon at: contest@midmichiganrwa.org. **MMM**



Members' Current & Upcoming Releases



May 2007

Cindy Spencer Pape: *Crazy for the Cowboy*, paperback, Wild Rose Press.

Patti Shenberger: *A Miracle Through Time* available now in e-book, in print May 11th from Wild Rose Press.

June 2007

Sarah Grimm: *After Midnight*, romantic suspense, an E-book release, Triskelion Publishing.

Michele Hickerty: *Wedding Jitters*, Ellora's Cave, June 29.

Cindy Spencer Pape: *Dragon in the System*, an e-book release, Cerridwen Press. June 21.

Contest Entry Advice

Still polishing your entry for the HEA contest and others? The MMRWA Traveling Library has the perfect tape for you.

To bullet-proof your entry, check out "Writing Contests: Dress Rehearsal..." the tape of Diane Burton's September, 2002 talk, complete with handout, to avoid "shooting yourself in the foot."

Contact Librarians Maris or Lucy to reserve it today! **MMM**

—THE WRITING LIFE—

[In honor of Mother's Day, we salute the intrepid, multi-tasking maternal souls among us who juggle family obligations and the desire to write. Three chapter members--at different stages of life, motherhood and writing careers--tell all.]



Jackie Braun

"I'm willing to make a lot of sacrifices to pursue my dream, but I don't want my family to be one of them."

Jackie Braun, a.k.a Jackie Braun Fridline, has always enjoyed making up stories, and from elementary school on, she dreamed of getting paid to do it. Jackie's second *Silhouette Romance*, **True Love, Inc.**, was a finalist for both a Rita Award and a National Readers' Choice Award, traditional category, in 2003. In January of 2004, Jackie quit her day job at *The Flint Journal*, where she had worked as a copy editor and award-winning editorial writer for 15 years, to follow her dream and write fiction full time. She has been happily married to her husband Mark since 1993 and is the mother of a son, Daniel.

A Mother Who Writes

By Jackie Braun

"Mom, do you think you could sacrifice some of your work time to play with your only child?"

My 6-year-old son actually asked me that question one afternoon after I'd picked him up from school. For a few weeks before that, deadlines and writing commitments had kept me hopping, meaning he'd had to entertain himself until either I'd finished or he'd found someone else to play with.

At first, his question amused me, given the grownup phrasing. But later, as I jotted down the incident in a journal I keep for him, I began to feel guilty. *Very guilty*. I noticed that I hadn't written much in the thing in recent months.

Was I neglecting him?

I'm sure this is a question all mothers ask, especially mothers who work. It can be hard to find a satisfactory balance between earning a living and parenting. In my case, this is especially true since both responsibilities coexist under the same roof.

In January 2004 I quit my day job to write romantic fiction and freelance. I also thought this would give me more time to spend with my son, who was then just three years old.

Looking back now, all I can say is, boy, was I naive. But my work schedule had become unpredictable, fluctuating between mornings and afternoons, with weekends and holidays thrown in. Carving out time to write was difficult, and my odd hours sometimes saw my husband and me passing one another like two ships in the night. So I gave my notice.

The first couple of years were lean financially even though I had several book contracts and regular freelance work. When you're used to being paid weekly, it's frustrating to hear "the check is in the mail." Money seemed to take forever to trickle in.

I had more than a few nights where I laid awake wondering what in the heck I'd been thinking, quitting the newspaper where I'd worked for 15 years. Sure, the hours had begun to take their toll, but at least I'd enjoyed a healthy paycheck and excellent benefits.

Determined to make things work, and to show my husband that his faith in me was not misplaced, I began to stack my writing schedule. I accepted more and more freelance assignments and shortened my book deadlines. Weekends often found me at my computer, my son and husband away having fun.

My efforts are paying off. I am where I'd hoped to be both financially and professionally. I have new writing goals now, even higher aspirations for the future, but my son's recent comment served as a wakeup call. I'm willing to make a lot of sacrifices to pursue my dream, but I don't want my family to be one of them.

Being a mother has helped shape the writer I am and the stories I tell, but more importantly, it has kept me grounded and filled me with great joy.

At the end of the day I am a mother who writes, not a writer who mothers. **MMM**

Soliloquy of an Empty Nester

By Wil A. Emerson

Wait until the children leave and then write the book of your heart, you say. You'll have plenty of time, you say. Peace, quiet, Freedom. Of course, there's laundry, food to prepare and an occasional sweep of the broom. No worry...the rest of the week is yours.

Glasses propped on my nose, thesaurus to the right, **Bartlett's Familiar Quotations** on the left, computer on and fingers dance to write the next Great American Novel.

Empty Nest...I live to write, write to live.

Husband: "Honey, I don't mean to disturb you but, I'm going to Wal-Mart for toilet paper. Twelve rolls for the price of three. Want to come along?"

Silent reply: "Can't you read the sign?...Do not disturb unless the house is on FIRE! I'll stand on my head under the shower before I bargain shop for t.p.!"

Daughter-in-law: "Mom, Jared needs a pick-up from school, dropped off at soccer at four, picked-up at five-thirty and taken to Boy Scouts. What would I do without you?"

Silent reply: "You would manage your time better and still love me if I said no."

Friend: "Gee, we haven't talked in a long time. Let's take off for the day and shop. You have nothing better to do now that you're an Empty Nester."

Silent reply: "The last time I had nothing better to do the surgeon put me in a coma and took out my gall bladder."

Postman: "Do you watch TV all day to get ideas for your stories?"

Silent reply: "No, I kill people, so I'll know exactly how they react—since you interrupted me, why don't I practice on you!"

And so it goes. Free time? An illusion or a precious commodity? Distractions, family commitments, social obligations and responsibilities eat up the day as though seven kids beg for food.

How do you tell people you'd rather write than anything else? Gently....its more Show than Tell. I take my laptop and/or Alpha Smart every where and accomplish more on the road than at home. The key to goal attainment has been persistence and personal sacrifice, thus, I don't 'play' as often as my friends.

The best time for me to write? When my husband is not at home. The Empty Nest has been replaced with Retired Spouse. Three boys were easier on my psyche! And so it goes...live to write, write to live. **MMM**



Wil A. Emerson

"The Empty Nest has been replaced with Retired Spouse. Three boys were easier on my psyche!"

*Wil A. Emerson, 2005 president of MMRWA, has her eye set on publishing contemporary romances with a lot of psychological drama involved. She started writing about twelve years ago after a creative hiatus of more years than she'd dare admit. **Taking Rosie's Arm**, women's fiction, was released in 2002.*

Lessons Learned While Traveling Down The Yellow Brick Road

By Lorelee Lillibridge



Lorelee Lillibridge

*“Making up stories makes
me happy and when
Grandma’s happy,
everyone is happy.”*

Lorelee Lillibridge has been a fan of romance novels for as long as she can remember. Reading them has always been a source of enjoyment, but writing them gives her a different kind of joy. She believes strongly in the power of love. Writing stories about ordinary people and extraordinary love is a way for her to share this joy with her readers. She makes her home in West Michigan with her husband of fifty years. Four children and their spouses, nine grandchildren and one great-grandchild make her life a very special place.

*Her first novel, **Accidental Hero**, was a December 2005 release from Silhouette Special Edition. You can read more about Lorelee and her books on her website, <http://www.loraleelillibridge.com/>.*

I’m frequently asked how I got started writing romances, followed immediately by the question, “Why?” My answer is always the same. I love the genre and I have a vivid imagination. Making up stories makes me happy and when Grandma’s happy, everyone is happy. That’s very important in my family.

I’m an incurable romantic, but I love to read a wide range of genres from contemporaries to historicals, romances to mysteries. I can’t imagine a world without books. Can’t imagine not writing them, either, however, my entry into the world of a published author didn’t begin until right after my 69th birthday and a week before my 50th wedding anniversary. Hey, the road to Oz was a long one and I took a lot of detours, okay?

Did I mention that the road was made of bricks? I stubbed my toes on those yellow suckers more times than I care to count. Took a wrong turn once or twice, too, when I experimented by writing different genres. With no internal GPS to guide me, I couldn’t focus without a map. I discovered the importance of having some sort of outline – often called the dreaded synopsis. Like it or not, I needed to learn how to write one, or I would probably still be wandering along the wrong road.

Even though I’d always dabbled in writing (and yes, it really was only dabbling) I didn’t take myself serious enough to finish a manuscript from Chapter One to The End. Oh, I claimed to be a writer, but nothing came from that statement except a bunch of unfinished stories. Sure, they had some potential and I kept writing them, but something always got in the way of their completion. After a few years, I realized I was the one putting those roadblocks in my path. Procrastination – a writer’s worst enemy when combined with Internal Editor. They can shut down a writer’s creativity in the blink of an eye. But I was rescued by a critique group who diagnosed by problem and gave me the push I needed to complete a manuscript.

That manuscript won First Place in a contest judged by a Silhouette Special Edition editor and ultimately sold to that line. ACCIDENTAL HERO was published in December 2005. Gee whiz, Toto, I wasn’t in Kansas anymore. I was in Published Authorland.

For me, one of the highlights of my first publication was the surprise my family gave me at one of my book signings. Imagine my shock when my ten grandchildren and one great-grandchild marched into the bookstore wearing tee-shirts emblazoned with a picture of my book cover on the front under the words “My Grandma Is A Famous Author” (The little one’s shirt said Great-Grandma) My daughters had planned the whole event. They all paraded the length of the mall touting my signing and causing quite a stir. And since it was right before Christmas, my book suddenly found its way under lots of Christmas trees as gifts to people who otherwise might never have read a romance. How cool was that? Even the bookstore staff was overjoyed at the spike in sales that day. I had loving proof that you can combine writing with raising a family - no matter what your age.

If I’ve learned one thing about the bumpy road to publishing, it is to write what you love, focus on that and never lose sight of your goal. There will always be obstacles, but belief in yourself is the first step that will take you all the way down the yellow brick road. Age has nothing to do with it. Determination does. Finish the book! I promise to come to your first signing!

MMM

—THE LAST WORD—

It's All About Choices

In 2003, the *Mid-Michigan Mirror* went from hard copy distribution by mail to being posted on the chapter's website. It also went from black and white to color. The number of photos and graphics increased, and so did its length.

At the April business meeting, some members commented that these publication changes made it expensive to print out for those who did not want to read it online. But how can the chapter continue to publish a full-featured newsletter and still address this concern?

For those who enjoy the full-featured format but not the printing expense, we've cut back on the newsletter's length by changing the font and reducing its size, and limiting the number of graphics. For monthly issues, we're aiming for a maximum length of 12 pages, 16 pages max for combined issues. (This month ran over a bit because of the retreat weekend recap.)

For the thrifty and the purists amongst us, who don't give a hoot about color and graphics, we have a no-frills alternative. This month, in addition to the *Mid-Michigan Mirror*, the chapter will begin publishing the *MMRWAEMirror*, a monthly text-only email edition of the newsletter. The *MMRWAEMirror* will contain a hyperlink to the full-featured *Mid-Michigan Mirror* on our website, for those who prefer that version, and a rich text format document file of the *MMRWAEMirror* will be uploaded to the MMRWABUSINESS list files section for those who wish to either download or print the *MMRWAEMirror* in a more readable format.

A few members continue choosing to receive the *Mid-Michigan Mirror* by mail in hard copy, which is another alternative.

It's all about choices, and where the chapter newsletter is concerned, our members now have three.

If you have any comments or suggestions on how we can continue to improve the *Mid-Michigan Mirror*, please send them to me at: mirror@midmichiganrwa.org.

Lana Miersen, Editor



Submission Guidelines

Topics: writing-related—business/marketing, craft, how-to, interviews with industry professionals, book reviews, member news, member bios, members' latest releases, and program recaps, etc.

Manuscripts: single-spaced, readable 12 pt. black font, no special formatting or colors, one-inch margins, saved in rich text format.

Deadline: the 2nd Saturday of the month prior to the month of publication, unless otherwise stated.

Policy

The *Mid-Michigan Mirror's* policy is to offer our original MMRWA articles to other RWA® chapters and loops to use with all credits given unless the author specifies restrictions in the article. The *Mirror* staff reserves the right to edit submissions for such things as spelling or typographical errors, punctuation, grammar, size requirements, etc., and content with author's approval.

RWA® sister chapters may reprint any information in this newsletter providing credit is given to MMRWA, *The Mid-Michigan Mirror*, and the article's author. Non-RWA® groups must secure permission from the author.

The opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of RWA®, or of the MMRWA and its individual members. Market information contained herein does not constitute an endorsement by RWA® or MMRWA. Readers are urged to determine for themselves the reliability and integrity of those with whom they deal. Writers are encouraged to check market report accuracy through the RWA® Hotline, (281) 440-6885, press 8.

Mid-Michigan RWA is a not-for-profit professional writers' organization incorporated in the State of Michigan. The business meeting minutes, treasurer's reports, and other legal documents of the corporation are published online in the files section of the restricted, members-only MMRWABUSINESS list.

The Mid-Michigan Mirror is a publication of Mid-Michigan Chapter # 12 of Romance Writers of America®. Copyright © 2007 by the Mid-Michigan Romance Writers of America. All rights reserved, unless otherwise stated.

Chapter Information

Non-members seeking information about Mid-Michigan RWA, our meetings, and joining our chapter, may email members@midmichiganrwa.org, or write to MMRWA, P.O. Box 2725, Kalamazoo, MI 49003-2725, or visit our chapter online at www.midmichiganrwa.org to learn all about us.